Shopping at the Trenton Computer Festival (TCF) Still a Major Attraction

Although 90 percent of the work in putting on TCF is associated with the speaker program and special exhibits, the lure of shopping is still a major part of the festival. The computer may have made Internet purchasing a normal part of our lives; but people still flock to the malls and come out to TCF for an electronics/computer shopping extravaganza. It is really shopping as entertainment! There is both a huge outdoor flea market in part of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) student parking lots and an indoor exhibit hall in the college's recreation center. Each of these areas offers its own special shopping attractions.

The flea market is dominated by used equipment and surplus dealers, and people who are simply cleaning house. You will find some very unusual *stuff* there and not all electronics. If you are into historic - old time radio and antiques, the flea market is definitely the place to visit. The flea market is also a *goldmine* for the tinkerer and fixer. You will find parts, equipment and tools there that you will find no where else.

The exhibit hall has the latest and the greatest along with some older and surplus items as well. You will find computers, monitors, printers, projectors, computer supplies and accessories including paper, disks, labels, memory… cell phones and all forms of related products including batteries, Bluetooth head sets… home entertainment systems and consumer electronics including speakers, hard to find cables… electronic toys, software of all types, CDs, DVDs, games, books, tools, electrical and electronics parts, and much more!

View of a portion of the TCF Exhibit Hall

Just as a picture just does not have the impact of seeing a scenic view in person, virtual shopping is not the same as real-time shopping. All the different booths, each a little different are a colorful visual attraction, and well worth visiting, even if you do not intend to buy. But don't be surprised if you end up buying something anyway. When Dr. Gregory Olsen, highly successful entrepreneur and private citizen astronaut was TCF2006 keynote speaker, he returned on Sunday to shop TCF. When asked why, he replied that he could buy items here that he could not get any place else! Price was obviously not the attraction, but it is for many. You can find some fantastic buys at TCF. Three years ago, when the lowest priced computer projectors where still selling near $2,000, Toshiba projectors were on sale at TCF for $600. Last year people were buying futuristic electronic scales and you-fly toy helicopters at prices you could not find else ware.

If you are a serious shopper, you should allow at least 4 to 5 hours to make your rounds. There will be food and refreshments on sale too. TCNJ's attractive campus with its two lakes offers a variety of places to sit and relax while you eat.

Not all the learning takes place in the lecture room, many of the TCF sellers have a wealth of experience and information that they are willing to share and can answer your questions. Some of the *old-timers* in the flea market have interesting stories to tell. There will also be members of the various organizations (wearing khaki caps with TCF in yellow) walking around, whom can also help with your questions.

The 33rd TCF will be held on Saturday and Sunday, April 26th and 27th at TCNJ in Ewing, New Jersey, and offers a weekend of computer entertainment including shopping, socializing and essentially free education (at no extra charge) in the form of seminars (50 minutes), workshops (110 minutes) and interactive demonstrations. TCF also includes a Friday Information Technology (IT) Professional Conference with Saturday sessions open to regular TCF attendees. More than 75 seminars and workshops will be presented over the TCF weekend. A two-day TCF admission pass is $12.50 if purchased in advance, but will be available at the door for $17. Passes for Sunday only are available for $12 at the door. For information about all of the events and activities at this year's TCF including the TCF IT Professional Conference, and to buy advanced tickets please visit http://www.tcf-nj.org/ or call the Trenton Computer Festival show management office at (201) 825-2229.